

REMARKS

The Office Action dated December 2, 2003 has been received and carefully considered. The above amendments and the following remarks are being submitted as a full and complete response to the Office Action.

Concerning the claim objections, the informalities noted with respect to claim 1 have been corrected in the above amendments.

Claims 8 and 9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

The dependency of claim 8 has been corrected, so that the claim now depends from claim 1.

Claims 1-4, 6 and 8-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nagai (JP 11-201161) in view of Yamada (U.S. Patent No. 6,240,796).

Claim 1 has been amended to more clearly define the structure of the opening in the slider, especially the inner surface thereof. Specifically, as currently amended, claim 1 states that the slider has an opening therein, which includes a rounded inner surface having an upwardly oriented U-shaped cross-section. Moreover, claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the cylindrical section of the feed screw nut is insertable into and removable from the slider through the opening, from an upper side of the slider, when the slider is accommodated in the frame.

Support for the claim limitations is provided in the original specification, especially FIG. 5.

Owing to the claimed structure, the feed screw nut and feed screw can be easily removed from the actuator body, without disassembling the slider from the frame. Such a structure facilitates assembly, and if necessary replacement, of the feed screw without requiring full disassembly of the other actuator components. In particular, there is no need to disassemble the slider from the frame in order to allow removal or insertion of the feed screw and the feed screw nut.

Such features are not true for the cited prior art. Although the Examiner has asserted that JP 11-201161 discloses a slider having a U-shaped opening, on inspection, the cited reference does not show a slider having a U-shaped opening. At best, the reference shows a slider formed of components 44a, 44b ("guide means" according to the reference) and 42 ("table member"), which when assembled, result in a downwardly oriented rectangular opening. Unlike the claimed invention, the cited prior art does not show or suggest a slider with an opening therein, which includes a rounded inner surface having an upwardly oriented U-shaped cross-section.

Further, with the structure of JP 11-201161, it is not possible for the feed nut (38) to be removed from the slider while the slider is accommodated in the frame. To remove the feed screw and feed screw nut, it would first be necessary to disassemble the slider from the frame. In other words, the slider binds the feed screw and feed screw nut inside the frame, so that simple insertion and removal of the feed screw and feed screw nut are not possible.

Yamada does not make up for the deficiencies of JP 11-201161. The reference shows a feed screw nut 17 formed of a cylindrical section 18 and a flange 19. However, Yamada does not show or suggest an opening in the slider having a rounded inner surface with an upwardly oriented U-shaped cross section, which would allow the feed nut and feed screw to be inserted into or removed from the slider, through the opening, while the slider remains accommodated in the frame.

Therefore, since neither of the applied references discloses a slider structure having an opening with an upwardly oriented U-shaped cross-section, as claimed, the features and advantages of the claimed invention could not have been obvious from the references. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the claimed invention is not anticipated and would not have been obvious to a person skilled in the art at the time the present invention was made. Reconsideration and allowance of amended claims 1-4, 6 and 8-10 is respectfully requested.

No fees are due. Notwithstanding, should it be deemed that fees, or deficiencies in fees, are required in connection with this or any accompanying communication, such amounts may be charged to the Attorney's Deposit Account No. 07-2519.

Respectfully submitted,



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